



MEMO



N O R T H C A R O L I N A D I V I S I O N O F
E M E R G E N C Y M A N A G E M E N T

Preparing Cities and Counties for Disaster

With our current economic challenges, homeland security interests, H1N1 pandemic flu and hurricane season, it only makes good sense to be as prepared for potential disaster as possible. The N.C. Division of Emergency Management offers these basic suggestions to help you better prepare your cities and counties.

1. **Encourage employees and their families to develop family emergency plans and kits.** Each individual and family should have plans made and supplies gathered together to evacuate quickly or completely sustain themselves at home for three to seven days if disaster strikes. Details concerning family preparedness may be found at: www.readync.org or in Spanish at www.listonc.org. If your employees are prepared at home, your agency will function better.
2. **Familiarize yourself with your city/county disaster plans.** Learn the details of your disaster plan now, before a real disaster develops. Ensure your disaster response team members are each familiar with their roles as defined in your plan. If you choose not to follow your disaster plan, your citizens and the media will want to know why.

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3. **Identify your agency's spokespersons.** Know the primary spokesperson (and at least two back-ups) for your organization during a disaster. Ensure that all employees also know who those spokespersons are. With today's instant communication, a disaster in your community can become world news as it happens. Your response could be breaking news, and you need to know who will be speaking for you.

4. **Develop a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) - then practice it.** Backup critical information like contact phone numbers, operational checklists, e-mail addresses, maps, operational procedures, necessary records and forms, and other critical information on portable electronic storage units in case you have to operate from an alternate location. Be sure your employees know the plan.

5. **Consider a policy to fuel all agency vehicles at the end of each business day.** Fuel is a precious commodity and critical to the operation of government services. An instant fuel crisis may hamper or halt your services. Implementing a policy that instructs your employees to fill agency vehicle fuel tanks would provide one to two days of operation while supply sources are identified.

6. **Build relationships with neighboring jurisdictions and develop mutual aid agreements.**

No single organization or agency can own and maintain all of the resources necessary for significant disaster response. Developing relationships and forming agreements before a disaster helps to ensure adequate response support when needed. Mutual aid support may also be sought through the State Emergency Operations Center at 800-858-0368.

7. **Learn how to request assistance.** Know how to quickly assess your need for assistance and ask for help. The best local contact is your emergency management office, most likely listed under county government. Your local emergency manager can connect you with mutual aid and state support resources in time of disaster.
8. **Ensure that your congregate facilities have emergency response and evacuation plans.** Schools, community centers, eldercare facilities, hospitals, shopping centers, auditoriums, recreation facilities and other such gathering areas for large crowds each need to have an emergency response and evacuation plan. Calling 911 is not an

9. **Recognize the role of the private sector in disaster.** Local business owners need access to their businesses as soon as possible so they can return to normal operations. The sooner local businesses are operational the sooner the community will return to normal.
10. **Recognize the value of volunteer organizations in disaster.** Volunteer organizations bring food, water and a variety of support resources for disaster survivors and disaster workers. Get to know those agencies and incorporate their capabilities into your plan.

September Hurricanes: Reflecting on the Past, Preparing for the Future

September marks several notable hurricane anniversaries for North Carolina. It has been 20 years since Hurricane Hugo pounded much of the Charlotte region, 10 years since Hurricane Floyd devastated much of the eastern half of the state, and five years since the mountains were clobbered by remnants of the back-to-back Hurricanes Frances and Ivan. While September is traditionally the peak month for hurricane activity along the East Coast, these four storms, in particular, helped to shape the way North Carolina Emergency management prepares for, responds to, recovers from and mitigates disasters.

Hurricane Hugo made landfall as a category 4 in Charleston, South Carolina Sept. 22, 1989. It then cut a swath north through Charlotte, weakening to a strong category 2 with winds speeds of 100 miles per hour. While impacts from the storm were felt over much of the state, the brunt of the storm was felt along the Brunswick County beaches and greater Charlotte area up through the northwestern part of the state.



Damage caused by Hurricane Floyd in Carteret County, Sept. 19, 1999.

Hurricane Floyd struck on Sept. 16, 1999 as a smaller category two storm but caused extensive damage because it added tremendous amounts of rain to an area saturated by Hurricane Dennis several weeks prior. Hurricane Floyd devastated much of central and eastern North Carolina and remains the state's costliest and most destructive storm.

By the time Hurricane Frances reached the mountains of North Carolina on Sept. 8, 2004, it was a tropical depression. Ivan followed 9 days later. Combined, the two storms dumped 20-30 inches of rain throughout the mountains, causing severe flooding and landslides throughout the region.

As a result of lessons learned from these storms, N.C. Emergency Management has spent much of the past decade developing or expanding initiatives to support the local county emergency management offices and better serve our citizens.

- Thirty-seven swift water rescue teams have been developed, trained and equipped to respond to flood emergencies. The teams have been active in recent weeks in several parts of the state as victims have been caught in floodwaters following heavy rainstorms.
- Helicopter and Aquatic Rescue Teams (HART) have been developed by combining specially trained local first responders with N.C. National Guard forces (including a UH-60 Blackhawk) to rescue lost persons in extreme wilderness areas or from flooded areas. HART teams have rescued several lost and injured hikers in the mountains in recent months.
- The Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) program began in 2001 to provide quick disaster response and rescue victims from a structural collapse. There are 11 regionalized response teams located throughout the state. Most recently, a USAR team assisted in the recovery of victims at the ConAgra plant in Garner.
- HazMat Regional Response teams were added with equipment and training provided by NCEM to assist local first responders with hazardous material incidents or unknown substance calls.

10 Year Continued

- The voice interoperability plan for emergency responders (or VIPER) system now provides a way all emergency response agencies to communicate with each other on one radio network.
- State Medical Assistance Teams (SMAT) were developed to provide additional medical support immediately following a disaster. The teams consist of eight hospital-based, 50-bed field hospital units and 39 county-based decontamination units. The field hospitals can be configured to meet a variety of needs up to a 400-bed hospital. The mobile hospitals have their own water, sinks, showers and sanitary facilities, as well as heating and cooling.
- The NC National Guard developed force and mission ready packages grouping together typical commodities and the necessary staff to support them to fill customary requests for resources following a disaster. The package also includes an estimated daily cost. The North Carolina force package concept has been adopted and implemented as a national model for deploying and tracking resources.
- Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams were developed to work closely with local health departments and first responders to provide coordinated scientific, medical, technical and epidemiological expertise when preparing for and responding to disasters and disease outbreaks. Seven teams are strategically located near major urban areas in the state; the program began in 2002.
- State Animal Response Teams and companion animal mobile equipment trailers (CAMET) are designed to help evacuees and their pets. Each county has designated pet-friendly shelters that allow evacuees and their small domestic animals to be co-located at the same facility. There are 24 trailers positioned across the state that contain basic supplies and equipment to quickly establish a pet shelter at the same facility as their owners.
- Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Floyd, North Carolina formed a unique partnership with FEMA to create and maintain all Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the state. All 100 counties have adopted new flood plain maps since the program began in 2000. The program has now become a model for the nation.

- In the past decade, the statewide Hazard Mitigation Program has purchased more than 7,000 structures on flood prone property, restricting the land parcels to open space in perpetuity. An additional 800 flood prone structures have been elevated. Both of these initiatives help to create safer communities by reducing the future impacts of natural and technological hazards.
- The state's Disaster Response and Recovery Fund was initially created to aid victims of Hurricanes Frances and Ivan in 2004. These grants help North Carolina communities break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.

North Carolina has a strong reputation for its ability to manage disasters. In 2008, the division became accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, a national standard-based assessment process for government agencies that coordinate preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities for natural and man-made disasters.

The lessons learned and programs developed in the past decade leave us better prepared to protect property and save lives in North Carolina.



USAR members organize shoring resources for ConAgra response, June 9, 2009.



N.C. National Guard members receive instructions on an exercise, June 20-23, 2009.



Each CAMET contains crates, a generator and other supplies for animal sheltering.

National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month, a nationwide initiative sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to encourage citizens to prepare now for emergencies. The 2009 campaign will focus on how preparing for emergencies goes beyond just having fire alarms, smoke detectors, dead-bolt locks and extra food. Instead, being prepared for emergencies needs to be a way of life for families, businesses and the community. In its sixth year of the campaign, FEMA has worked with Citizen's Corp and the Ad Council to deliver the preparedness message to all.

North Carolina Emergency Management Director Doug Hoell said September is an appropriate month to remind citizens to be prepared.

"September is the height of hurricane season in our state," said Hoell. "Hurricanes Hugo, Fran, Floyd, Frances and Ivan all impacted this state in September."

Emergency preparedness doesn't just involve hurricanes. In the last five years, North Carolina has experienced more than 218 tornadoes, more than 4,500 severe thunderstorms, 15 tropical storms or hurricanes plus blizzards, ice storms and heat waves. Already this year, North Carolina has had an unusually high number of forest fires which have been made worse by the drought conditions in much of the state. During these weather events, it is important that citizens are prepared to evacuate or survive in their homes without power and other utilities.

Information about planning for emergencies in North Carolina is available in English at www.readync.org and in Spanish at www.listonc.org. Information for the deaf and hard of hearing also is available on www.readync.org. The website for the national preparedness campaign is www.ready.gov.

Responding to the Call, Search and Rescue Teams Meet the Challenge and Saves Lives

When Hurricane Floyd struck in Sept. 1999, dozens of search and rescue teams were scattered across the state. While a few had training in swift water rescue, most teams consisted of local volunteers with rudimentary training who simply wanted to help.

Thousands of people are alive today because of the hard work of those dedicated volunteers. But the response highlighted the need for a coordinated statewide program with more consistent training.

After Floyd, the Division of Emergency Management worked with local communities and counties to develop a new way to do business during disasters. The goal was to provide consistent training and equipment so that rescue teams could aid neighboring jurisdictions during a crisis, regardless of the conditions or terrain.

Three types of search and rescue programs have been developed over the past decade: Swift Water Rescue Teams, North Carolina Helicopter and Aquatic Rescue Teams and Urban Search and Rescue Teams. These highly-trained and equipped teams, comprised of local volunteer firefighters, law enforcement officials or emergency medical technicians, rescue people from flooded homes or vehicles, pull people from fast moving rivers and search collapsed buildings or structures for survivors.

Since all of the teams are owned and operated by cities or counties, many municipalities contact each other directly to request assistance. Help can also be requested through the state's Emergency Management 24-hour Operations Center.

North Carolina has developed a national reputation for its search and rescue program. Today 37 local agencies have swift water rescue teams that meet stringent national standards. Eleven squads have been certified to provide urban search and rescue.

The teams have been trained using national standards and best practices, making them a valuable resource to other states. North Carolina is better prepared today because those local response agencies and the state invested the resources to build a solid, coordinated statewide program.

Search and Rescue Teams Train for Hurricane Season

In August the N.C. Division of Emergency Management and city of Greenville sponsored a three-day course to prepare urban, swift water and Helo-Aquatic Rescue Teams for hurricane season. Training was conducted at the former Pinecrest Mobile Home Park. The park was completely flooded during Hurricane Floyd prompting one of the largest mass rescues in eastern North Carolina. Now owned by the city of Greenville, the property was bought using federal funds as part of one of the largest hazard mitigation projects in North Carolina.

Two dozen emergency response agencies from across the state participated in the field training course to practice rescuing citizens trapped in vehicles, buildings and trees by hurricane winds and rising flood waters.

The following agencies participated in the exercise: N.C. National Guard, State Highway Patrol, N.C. Dept. of Transportation, Pitt County Emergency Management, Pitt County Sheriff's Office, Pitt County Emergency Medical Services, Farmville EMS, Eastern Regional State Medical Assistance Team, Greenville Fire/Rescue Dept., New Bern Fire Dept., Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad, Raleigh Fire Dept., Cary Fire Dept., Durham Fire Dept., Chapel Hill Fire Dept., Transylvania EMS, Asheville Fire/Rescue, Burke County EMS, Gaston County EMS, Charlotte Fire Dept., South Orange Rescue Squad,



Helio-Aquatic crew member practices air lifting a victim.

EM Forum Summary

North Carolina Emergency Management hosted its biennial forum Aug. 12 via SmileTiger's eMeeting server. This year marked the first time, the forum was not held at a particular location but rather on the internet. Live video stream allows participants to see presentations in real time and post questions and comments to message boards from their own computer. A moderator on site reviews the messages and relays them to the speaker for a response.

The Aug. meeting included a 2009 H1N1 flu update from Dr. Jeff Engel, State Health Director; an overview of hurricane operations presented by NCEM leaders; and a review of the Emergency Management Performance Grant formula presented by NCEM Director Doug Hoell.

More than 80 locations with an estimated 100 viewers participated in the forum. The locations could be county offices, branch offices, etc where many different individuals within the location could participate from their office computer.



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"In the Business of Saving Lives and Protecting Property"

The North Carolina Division of Emergency Management was formed in 1977 to coordinate the preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities of all agencies for emergency management within North Carolina. It performs this mission by planning, organizing, staffing, equipping, training, testing and activating emergency management programs during times of need.